Echo media

BM BOX 7014,
LONDON, WC1N 3XX

NOV 89

FREE

Towards 1992–
Open for business,
closed for refugees

KURDISH REFUGEES

Around 5000 people marched through the streets of Hackney on October 15th in a solidarity demonstration in support of the Kurdish refugees seeking political asylum in this country.

Nearly 4000 Kurdish refugees (mostly workers and farmers from the Kurdish regions of south-east Turkey) have arrived in the UK since May this year, fleeing political persecution from the Turkish authorities. The Turkish army have been in force in the area for over five years now, harrassing entire villages and demanding information about the Kurdish Workers Party (Marxist guerrillas who are seeking an independent Kurdistan).Most of the Kurds who have arrived here have experienced the brutal repression of the Turkish government and it's fascist agents ; arrest,imprisonment, interrorgations,beatings,torture and saw that coming to Britain was the best way of improving their situation. Since arriving here they have faced a continued wave of harrassment from the government, the Home Office, the racist immigration agencies and prison system. Many have been sent back to Turkey on their arrival, others forced into detention camps and prisons and all denied any financial assistance from the government.

Five days before the Hackney demo, two Kurds being held at the Harmondsworth Detention Centre near Heathrow airport set fire to their cell after hearing their applications for political asylum had been turned down and their return to Turkey was imminent. The fire caught hold and the men suffered heavy body burns. One of the men, Siho Iyiguven, died as a result of his 30% burns.....a victim of the Home Office's racist immigration policy.

Despite facing hardship and harrassment, the Kurdish community in London is fighting back. The refugees and supporters continue struggling for their imprisoned comrades. The prisoners have organised hunger-strikes, and supporters have held nightly vigils outside the prisons. On 28th October over 3000 people marched behind the coffin carrying Siho Igiguven from Stoke Newington to Whitehall.

Further info: Kurdish Refugee Support Group, 489,Kingsland High Road,London E8

BEATRICE OFFEH

Beatrice Offeh is a 25 year old woman who is being threatened with deportation after living in this country for 6 years. She has a 15 month old son, born in this country, whose father is a British citizen. Although she no longer lives with him, the father is in regular contact with the child and his sister and mother continue to give her support and assist with bringing up her son.

Since coming to this country Beatrice has built a life here, working to support herself and her child. The Home Office is threatening to deport her to Ghana where she no longer has any family or any way of re-establishing herself.

Unless we stop this deportation the Home Office will be preventing the child from seeing both his parents and seperating him from the only family he has.

Further info/donations and support:Beatrice Offeh Defence Campaign c/o 192 Evelyn St., London SE8. Tel:692 1308.

POLL TAX

The Poll Tax is a replacement for the old rates system - instead of the amount of tax you pay being dependant on local services and the size of your house etc, everyone in the same area will now have to pay the same amount irrespective of how much they earn. It is massively unpopular. In Scotland it has already been introduced, while in England and Wales it is a year behind and registration has yet to be completed.

At least 25% of people in Scotland have still not payed despite alot having recieved 3 warning letters. In England and Wales opposition to the Poll Tax is mainly taking place in poorer working-class areas - in some parts of London after the first deadline for returning registration forms, only 50% of people had done so. There were symbolic registration form burn-ins all over London. Poll Tax snoopers are now out and about trying to get people to fill in and return their forms. We have heard of them being attacked or chased off in Southwark, Stamford Hill, Dalston and Tower Hamlets, but this is no doubt happening all over London and elsewhere.It is doubtful whether registration will be completed by December 1st as supposed to be. However if need be the authorities can register almost everyone from existing files (e.g. social security, housing benefit, income tax etc), so we need to start preparing for a massive campaign of non-implementation by those actually employed in Poll Tax related jobs.

REMEMBERANCE DAY

Once again the fascists from the National Front plan to hold a 'Rememberance Day Parade', this year it's on Sunday 12th November. They're assembling at Bressenden Place near Victoria at 2.00pm for a planned march to the Cenotaph. A counter-demo will take place and Anti-Fascist Action are calling for people to get to the junction of Victoria Street and Bressenden Place at 12 noon to stop the fash marching. It's possible the police will ban the NF from marching, in which case it's important as many people go on to the non-stop picket of South Africa house because every year the fash have attempted to attack it, usually protected by the cops. This

tactic of occupying the NF's meeting point before they do proved very successful in May when hundreds of nazi-skins tried to gather for the 'Blood and Honour' rally and gig and were physically prevented from doing so by anti-fascists.

BRAINLESS NAZI PIGS

On September 23rd, several hundred anti-fascists gathered in Bradford, West Yorkshire, in an attempt to stop the planned march by the nazi British National Party. This nazi grouping had been targetting the area for a long time now, an area which has a large Asian population and had held several rallies in and around Bradford in the months before.

Tony Lecomber (a.k.a. Wells), remembered by most anti-fascists as the bungling bomber who blew himself up when planting a bomb outside the bookshop of the Worker's Revolutionary Party some years ago, boasted in the local paper that the BNP would mobolise at least a thousand fascists for their planned march and rally through the streets of Bradford. Big words. In the end the BNP's march (and counter-demo) was banned by the local police, but the anti-fascists decided to go on and occupy the field in the Eccleshill area of town where the nazi scum had planned to go and hold their rally. The police were out in force, obviously not liking the sight of several hundred anti-fascists, many masked up, waiting for any sign of approaching nazis. They didn't turn up there, but word soon went round that BNP-types were seen heading towards a pub a few miles outside Bradford city centre. Everyone jumped back into their vans etc and shot off towards the George and Dragon pub at Apperley Bridge. About sixty members of the BNP had been bussed in, in a convoy of vans, escorted and protected by several hundred police who were out in force - at least 30 riot vans, police helicopter, dog-handlers, cops on horses etc. The only road leading to the pub was blocked by lines of cops, who began making arrests as anti-fascists tried to get towards to pub. Within half an hour or so the police escorted the BNP out of the area. It was a disapointing day for the fascists with such a tiny number turning out to hear their fürher, John Tyndall, address their rally, held in the middle of nowhere !

MARCH TO THE BNP H.Q/BOOKSHOP IN WELLING, KENT ON NOV 25th.
For details: Greenwich Campaign Against Fascism + Racism.
Tel:- 01-855 4343

COMMUNITY OF RESISTANCE

Late afternoon on Friday 29th of September , police carried out a massive so-called 'drugs raid' on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham , North London. Over 400 cops were swiftly deployed in and around the estate , after turning up in a convoy of unmarked furniture vans. Many of them wore full riot-gear , and were armed with axes, sledgehammers , crowbars and in some cases guns.

Mass arrests followed as the cops rampaged through the estate under orders to search anyone between the ages of 15 to 30 years old. At least nine of those arrested were charged with Public Order offences after they were harrassed and provoked by police. At least five of those arrested were assaulted by the cops along with others. Injuries included a broken nose and a partially paralysed hand caused by a compressed nerve.

Police big-wigs maintain that it was a carefully planned raid , which they mounted in order to put a stop to the 'drug problem' that was a 'threat to the young' living on the estate. They claimed to have had 'proof' of 'open drug-dealing' as they had been using video surveillance for weeks.

".....We have taken steps to discover precisely where these drugs are sold and who is responsible" , said Dick Stacey , Cheif Superintendent of Tottenham police, in a letter distributed to residents during the massive occupation of Broadwater Farm. Then how come , if the cops knew who the 'drug-dealers' were , that they didn't carry out dawn raids on the homes of any induviduals supposedly involved , as they would of done elsewhere in the country ?

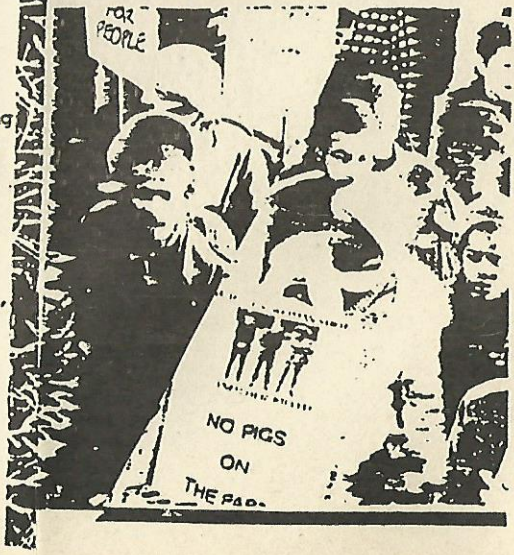
"....Because this is Broadwater Farm , they wanted to put on a show of strength" said Millard Scott of the BWF Defence Campaign.

Contrary to what the police and media want us all to believe , in an attempt to account for their actions , the police didn't find a great amount of drugs. A relatively small amount of cannabis and a gram or two of cocaine was seized. Hardly the massive 'threat to the young' as the cops had claimed.

Did the police consider the threat to the young (and old alike) ,as they charged around the estate weilding iron bars ? Or the effect on a 10 month-old child having it's mother dragged away to be stripped-searched in the back of one of the pig's furniture vans ?

...All this after only two weeks previously , the police announced that due to their efforts in 'Community Policing' , there had been a dramatic drop in the 'crime rate' on the estate.

It was no coincidence that the raid was carried out only a week before the 4th anniversary of the Broadwater Farm Uprising in 1985 , when the police killed Cynthia Jarret and the anger of people in Tottenham resulted in the death of P.C. Blakelock who , riot-clad , chose to take a part in the police attack on BWF. The cop who murdered Cynthia Jarret remains in the force today. In the wake of the '85 Uprising , hundreds were arrested and charged. Forty-two were given long prison sentences , including the TOTTENHAM THREE , Winston Silcott , Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite , who were framed for the murder of a cop , sentanced to life imprisonment on no forensic or photographic evidence.



Four years on , little has changed. The police have not yet learned to respect the rights and lives of black people. Raids on black families and assaults on other members of the public are still commonplace in Tottenham. This recent attack on BWF by the cops was directly aimed at intimidating the community , using the media who accompanied them and the phony 'war on drugs' to attempt to criminalise the Farm. This type of tactic mirrors the authorities phoney 'drugs war' in the States , where night-time curfews and the widening of police powers are meaning further daily repression in predominantley black , working - class neighbourhoods. The media who joined in the massive attack were carefully chosen by Scotland Yard , from TV and newspapers who would make sure they only filmed/reported the raid in favour of the police. The media hacks had spent all day with the cops , since six in the morning , when they were having cosy chats with top pigs from the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard , at Hendon Police College.

policeman

What is the policeman doing? He is holding up his hand to stop the motor cars. He will let the old woman cross the street in safety. Policemen take care of us. They see that everybody keeps the law. They take bad men to prison.

This attack on BWF had nothing to do with drugs. It was all about trying to bully the local community into submission , a community which has struggled and fought for justice and freedom from police intimidation and racism over the years.

A week after the police raid on BWF estate , around 350 people held an angry demo outside Tottenham Police Station. At times traffic came to a stop as people spilled onto the roads. Various BWF residents voiced the general feeling that the so-called , 'community leaders' of the estate were nothing more than oppotunist do-gooders , friendly with the police and always eager to 'calm' any sign of resistance to provocative , racist harrassment by the authorities.

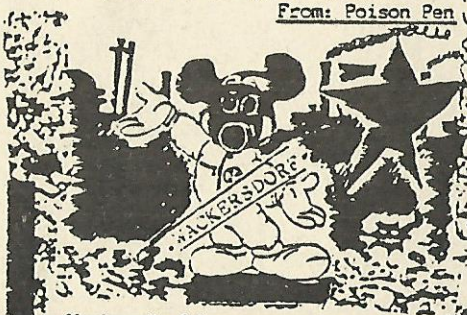
The struggle will continue , everywhere , until the cops are out of our communities and off of our streets!

COPPERS NARKS

Sunday August 6th was the 44th anniversary of the USA's mass murder of 60,000 civilians at Hiroshima in Japan.As usual anti-nuclear activists in this country commemorated the anniversary in various ways.One action which has become almost traditional on this occasion is to spray human forms onto the pavement in non-permanent paint to represent the the shadows left by the vapourised bodies after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and to remind the public of what may lay in wait for us if we do not dismantle the war-machine.

On the night of August 6th,a group calling itself South Eastern Peace Autonomous Action sprayed a number of human forms and peace slogans around Sevenoaks town centre.The response of the local C.N.D. group was to totally condemn the action,phone the police(!) and contact the local council to offer their services in helping to remove the figures and slogans!!A spokesperson for Sevenoaks C.N.D. group,Mrs Joan Buck,is quoted in the local paper as saying, "We in no way condone the action - it's anti-social and wholly inexcusable" and "the last thing we want is for people to be inconvenienced".

From: Poison Pen



Wackersdorf has proved a humiliating defeat for the German nuclear industry.A decade of militant direct action by local people and the anti-nuclear movement has forced them to cancel their plans for a Bavarian Sellafield.The site will now be used to produce solar energy cells and recylce BMW cars.

As Hans Schurier,a local activist, bluntly put it,"Without our resistance the plant would have been built." The 500 tons of radio-active waste generated by the German nuclear industry will now be sent to Cap Le Hague and Sellafield.

Source : Anti-Nuclear Network

WELCOME TO SOUTH AFRICA

Recent figures released by the Prison Reform Trust show that black people in Britain are eight times more likely to be sent to prison than whites.If white people were jailed at the same rate,the prison population would exceed 300,000. It's about 50,000 at the moment,the highest proportional imprisonment rate in Western Europe.

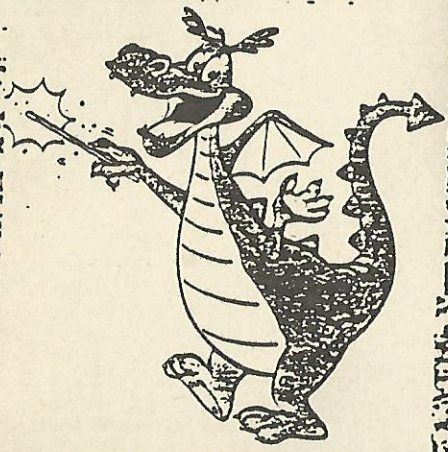
ELECTRONIC TAGS

The first prisoners to have to wear electronic tags were chosen by court and Home Office officials in Nottingham on August 14th. The Hawk Home Curfew System (produced by Marconi)comprises of an electronic tag which the prisoners have fastened around their ankles and a home-base reciever which sends out a code to the central computer control unit, operated by Securicor from a room within Nottingham Magistrates Court.The private security firm will recieve the code if the prisoner goes out before or after the pre-set curfew limits. This 1990's techno-ball and chain is soon to be appearing in crime-ridden underclass ghettos near us all folks ! But don't worry, a project manager from Marconi says, "You can bath or shower with it on and it is ergonomically designed to minimise skin contact.It's also non - allergic..we tested 80 materials to find the right one". Great!

YUP IN FLAMES

On 10th August the offices of estate agents Cooke Wood and Caird in Bangor, north Wales, went up in flames after a timed incendary device ignited.

The Welsh nationalist group, Meibion Glyndwr/Sons of Glendower claimed responsibility for the attack, as part of their guerrilla campaign against the cheque-book invasion of rural Wales.



While homelessness figures rise rapidly throughout Wales and rich and privileged yuppies continue buying up holiday/second homes across the country, the group have vowed to step up their campaign of direct action. Since December 1979 over 150 holiday homes and 34 estate agents in England and Wales, who specialise in selling off rural Wales to the rich, have been hit by the group.

WE ONLY HAVE TO BE LUCKY ONCE, YOU HAVE TO BE LUCKY ALWAYS

In the run-up to the 20th anniversary of British troops hitting the streets of N.Ireland, and suspecting a possible attack on her Downing Street fortress, Thatcher recently asked security chiefs to step up protection on her humble little house. Aswell as surveillance cameras, crash barriers and armed police permanentley on stand-by protecting the most famous and most hated street in the country, a new barrier called the 'blocker' has been installed. A concerete block will now spring up a few hundred yards from her door if any have-a-go heroes or kamikazi guerillas decide to drive down.

HACKNEY FILTH GO BESERK..AGAIN

A 50 year old man was viciously beaten up by a gang of Hackney pigs on July 20th. Rapheal Joseph was driving his motorbike home from work when he took a wrong turn and ended up going down a one-way street the wrong way. A car-load of filth, obviously bored and suddenly realising they had the chance of playing at Starsky and Hutch, gave chase and were soon joined by another five filth-mobiles (one which took it a bit far and ended up somersaulting onto it's roof). As Rapheal stopped and bean to dismount from his bike, one of the cop cars drove into him. He got up and pleaded with them not to hurt him any further, but the cops set about him, beating him so badly he lost conciousness. He heard one of the pigs say he thought they had killed him. On top of all this, Rapheal is to be charged with riding his motorbike without due care and attention.

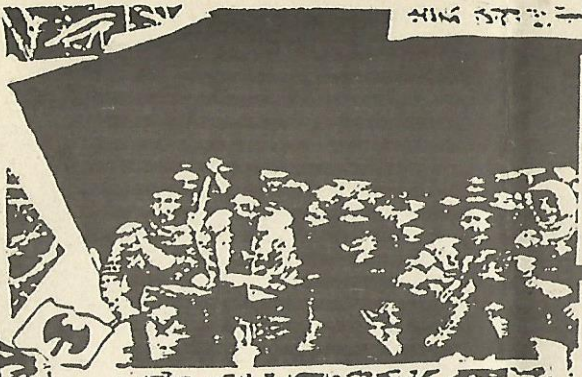
LEEDS BUST FUND

LEEDS BUST FUND

LEEDS BUST FUND - AUTUMN APPEAL !

As always, Leeds Bust Fund is in need of money. In the North this year there have been various actions and events , especially anti-fascist activities which have put people in jeopardy.

Whether or not there are court cases in progress, or fines due, a financial back-up has to be maintained. This solidarity fund needs support to carry on as a basic necessity. We hope that anyone that can help will get in touch at the following address. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to:- LEEDS BUST FUND, c/o Box ASS, 42 Call Lane, LEEDS, LS1 6DT.



NEW YORK LESBIANS & GAYS GET ANGRY !

20 years after the pigs raided the Stonewall Inn in New York,and lesbians and gays fought back,there were two contratsting demonstations in London and New York.

In New York,a record 200,000 people marched past the original site of the Stonewall riots.Later that evening thousands of lesbians and gays were still on the street outside the Stonewall Inn,holding up traffic on 7th Ave. One car driver shouting anti-gay slogans,drove his car into the crowd,injuring four people.The crowd was furious and chased the car,smashed it up and later burnt it.The passengers fled the car and ran into a nearby theatre and the crowd surrounded the theatre.The police arrived and took the occupants of the car to a police station,followed by a 1000 demonstrators!They smashed police station windows,burnt the American flag,and now even more lesbians and gays arrived on the scene.More window smashing occured and police cars were wrecked throughout the night.

NO RIOTS PLEASE,WE'RE BRITISH

This demonstration in New York was in sharp contrast to the Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade in London.LGFM(Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement)went with slogans,black flags,loud music,500 leaflets,and anger at the way the State is treating us.It was an exciting sight to see so many of us out and proud in Hyde Park.But the organisers didn't want aconfrontational march and agreed a route with the pigs to avoid Downing Street and the general public.It was intended to be a quiet celebration...celebrate what?Section 28?Gay age of consent 21?No sex allowed for anyone under 16?Can't hold hands or kiss in the street?That we all haven't died of AIDS?That lots of us are in prison,'care',mental hospital, or trapped with family?

Things are getting WORSE for us,and lesbians and gays must start fighting back or the police and State will continue to oppress and imprison us.

LESBIANS AND GAYS IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua's first Lesbian and Gay march took place on July 19th.It was part of the annual celebrations of the end of the dictatorship in 1979. A group of about 50 people,half of them Nicaraguans dressed in black t-shirts with pink triangles,marched, chanted and danced amongst the crowds of 350,000.The Nicaraguan Lesbian and Gay Collective (which was on the march),is working with the Sandinista Health Ministry to educate about safer sex practices as well as doing work to "promote" homesexuality.Although the Health Ministry supports the work,Nicaragua is poor and fighting US aggression,so it hasn't any dosh.!Presente! are a group of lesbians and gays working ion solidarity with the group in Nicaragua.
!Presente!,c/o Unit W55,TEC,560 High Rd.,Tottenham,London,N17 9TA.

From: Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement,BM Box 207,London,WC1N 3XX.

CLOSETS ARE FOR CLOTHES NOT PEOPLE

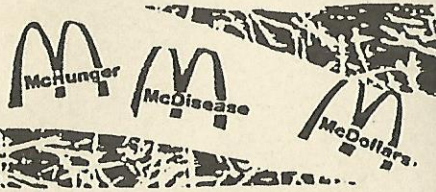
Police sent in mounted officers and dog-handlers into a quiet churchyard in Fulham at the end of September in an attempt to stamp out cruising.The resident vicar complained to the police after a wedding party leaving the church said they saw two men having sex in the yard.

Fulham police mounted a massive surveillance operation of the area and so far have arrested 27 men, who are due to appear in court this month.They claim to have mounted such a high-profile campaign to stamp out cruising that they have stirred up local moral panic and homophobia. Already one local resident has boasted on the radio that he used an air rifle to shoot at and hit a gay man. The police say they plan to maintain the operation,obviously designed to keep gay men away and off the streets.

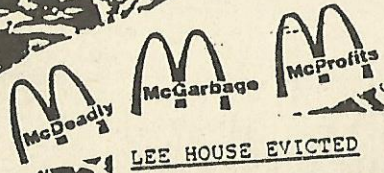
Source : Capital Gay

ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

This year's Anarchist Bookfair on the 7th of October was, like usual, well attended. Hundreds of people drifted in and out of London's Conway Hall throughout the day. There were loads of stalls, and quite a wide range of different groups taking part, ranging from class struggle groups to green hippies.



A couple of weeks later, at the same venue, the 2nd annual Anti-McDonalds Fayre was held. Organised by Greenpeace (London),(the anarchist group, not Greenpeace Ltd), it was generally thought to be quite a success. Again,hundreds of people filled the hall, with lots of stalls to look at, (mainly animal rights orientated). There were also videos, workshops and live music throughout the day.



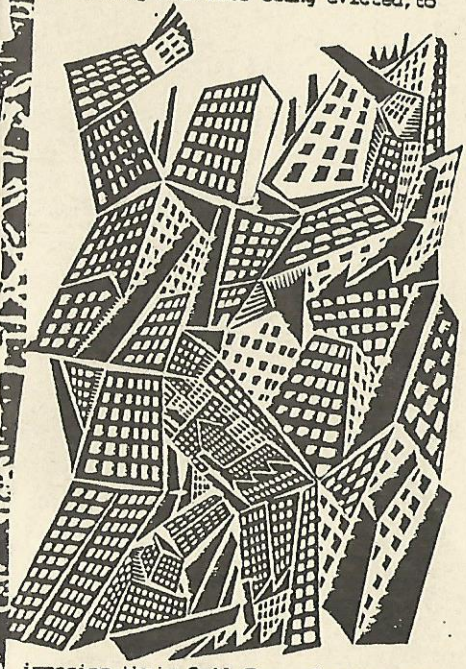
LEE HOUSE EVICTED

Around 50 people turned up to resist the eviction of the squatted Lee House Community Centre in Hackney on August 9th.The building had been occupied by local homeless people In October '88 and after a lot of renovating and re-decorating by the squatters,it begun operating with the cheapest veggie cafe in London,anarchist/alternative bookshop,video evenings,creche(sometimes), skateboard ramp etc.

Despite offering these facilities, which were used by local people(especially the skateboard ramp by lots of the local kids who would otherwise of been out skating down the dangerous roads), Hackney Council's Social Services would not offer another suitable building nor negotiate with the squatters.

Two days before the eviction was due, work on barricading the building began, windows boarded etc...though on the morning of the eviction no baliffs showed up!A council sherriff and another housing official that did show up were greeted with paint/stink bombs.

A few hours later it was decided to move on to the Town Hall where a first floor room and balcony overlooking the street were occupied.Banners were draped over ("Lee House was left empty for years,then occupied and turned into a community centre,then evicted..WHAT NEXT?" and "From Stamford Hill and community services being evicted,to



imposing their Poll Tax...Resist council hypocracy and betrayl!") and so began three and a half hours of angry metal-bashing noise to draw attention to the protest.After this,not feeling much more could be achieved and rumours that the cops were circling the building,eager to move in and nick everyone, the occupation was called off and everyone left in one large group.No arrests.

ANTI-I.M.F. DEMO

On the 27th September, around 40 people held a picket outside the Bank of England in protest against the I.M.F./World Bank's debt war against the peoples of the 'Third World'. Afterwards 10 people went on and managed to get into the World Bank offices in the Haymarket and briefly occupied them.

smash apartheid!

WORK FOR S.A. ? , NO WAY !

Two workers at Granby Plastics in Leicester have been sacked by the management after they refused to work on an order for a South African company. The workers, Ross Galbraith and Gary Sheriff, were given the boot after they went to talk to the owner of the plastics firm to explain they didn't want to get blood on their hands working for apartheid. Two days later they recieved a week's notice and sacked. Because of this they both are now jobless and because of shit D.S.S. rules, they can't claim Unemployment Benefit for the next six months. They are now obviously suffering great financial hardship -a defence fund has been set up; South Africa Solidarity Committee, c/o Leicester and District Trade Union Council, 138 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1LB.

FROM PICKETING TO 'BRICK IT IN !'

On 6th September, the day of the racist elections in South Africa , (where the 87% black majority are denied the right to vote), several hundred anti-apartheid demonstrators held a rally outside the South African embassy in Central London. The road in front of the embassy was blockaded , but cops broke it up and arrested people. Not everyone there was content with a passive sit-down in front of Trafalgar Square's dense traffic and missiles were thrown at the building which recieved at least one broken window.

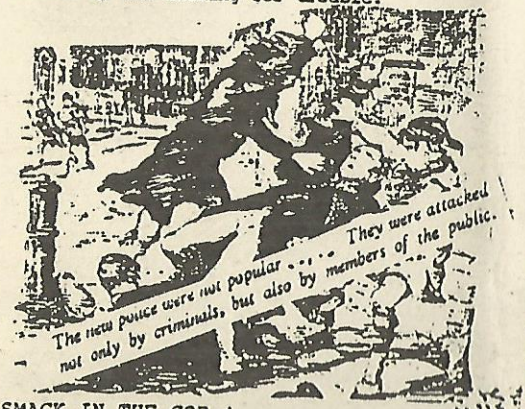
APARTHEID IS NO HOLIDAY

Prosecution lawyers dropped a case of criminal damage against an anti - apartheid activist, because they did not want to give him a chance to air his views in court. John had recently been arrested after plain-clothes police grabbed him after he'd finished spraying "Apartheid is no holiday" on a billboard adverstising South African Airways outside Olympia during the World Travel Market in London. The Crown Prosecution service expected him to plead "guilty", but when they heard he was prepared to fight the case in court they asked for the case to be dropped.

TOOLED UP AND LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Mid June ; two cops bit the dust during an hour-long running battle with youths in Andover,Hants.

The same day eleven youths were nicked after fighting the police in Blanford,Dorset. The police blamed both incidents on "youngsters getting tanked up and looking for trouble"... we blame it on bored rural cops getting tooled up and looking for trouble.



SMACK IN THE GOB !

A cop was seriously injured after he recieved a hefty smack in the gob resulting in severe facial injuries in Harlow,Essex on August 12th. It happened after two hundred local youths fought the police who were trying to clear the Northgate area of young people leaving nightclubs .

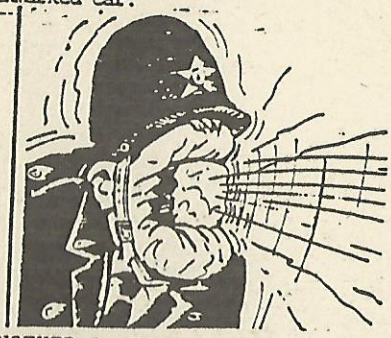
BRISTOL BOBBY BASHING

Meanwhile in St.Pauls,Bristol,cops came under attack after arresting three people they say were driving stolen cars.

More than forty youths hurled stones at the police who had swarmed into the area and smashed up several patrol cars.

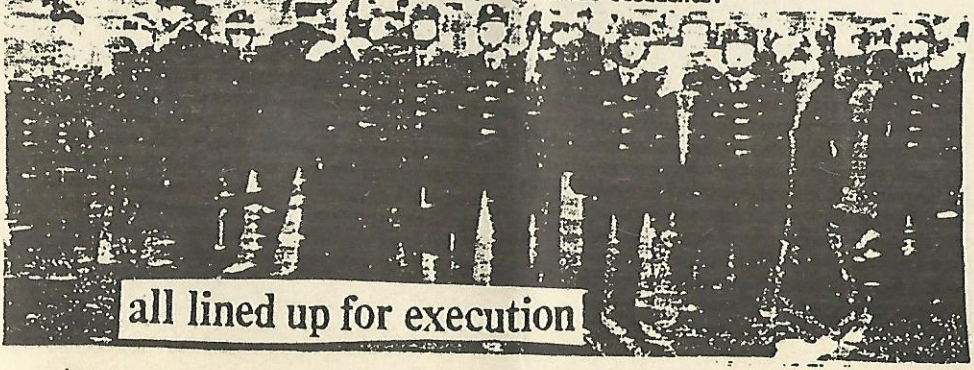
PLAIN-CLOTHES VISITS HOSPITAL

Plain-clothes police recieved similar treatment on the streets of Chapeltown,Leeds in the early hours of September 1st. One of the officers had to pay visit to the hospital after plucky locals trashed their unmarked car.



ANOTHER 14 RECIEVE TREATMENT !

Further filth-bashing occured at an acid-house event being held in fields at Sidlow Bridge,near Reigate. The local constabulary,who insist all young people should be tucked up in bed before midnight,turned up to try and put a stop to the party taking place. A total of 14 cops were hurt after they attempted to put their foot (size 12 DM's) down,seven of them who had CS gas cannisters lobbed at them. The rest recieved not-so polite exchanges from the security's baseball bats and pack of rottweilers, aswell as a liberal shower of Brixton confetti. On top of this, the cops decided to retreat after they feared one of their colleagues had been snatched by acid-heads and held as a hostage ! Rumours say he was last seen necking a tab of ecstacy and handing out love-beads to tired-eyed local residents.



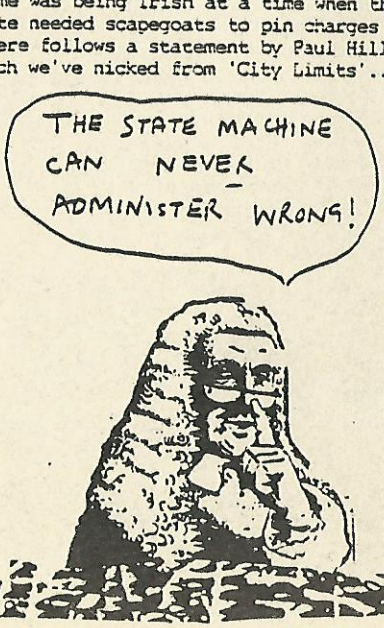
GUILDFORD FOUR

On Thursday 19th October, Gerard Conlon, Carol Richardson and Patrick Armstrong were released from prison, after they had spent 14 long years locked up for bombings that they did not commit. The next day, Paul Hill was flown to Belfast for a 10 minute court appearance for the killing of a British soldier in Belfast in the early seventies and then released on bail. The so-called Guildford Four had been framed by the British State for bomb attacks on two pubs in Guildford and one in Woolwich in 1974 in which seven people were killed and over 90 injured. All four were convicted solely on confessions, which they retracted in court, saying they were forced out of them by the fear of torture and beatings by the Surrey police force. No scientific or identification evidence was produced in court and eager to find scapegoats the four were framed by police and Home Office.

Two or three police officers are to face criminal proceedings over the case - this is obviously only the tip of the iceberg as many more must have been aware of what was happening for the convictions to have stood up in the first place.

Meanwhile, the six men convicted of the pub bombings in Birmingham in the same year, the Birmingham Six, continue to be held in prison, serving time for crimes they did not commit. Again, their only crime was being Irish at a time when the State needed scapegoats to pin charges on.

Here follows a statement by Paul Hill, which we've nicked from 'City Limits'.....



BRITISH JUSTICE... NO JUSTICE!

I had an inkling that something unusual was happening in Albany when I was told to pack a small kit. I thought that meant I was going into solitary confinement. At the reception, I sensed a change in the staff's attitude. They were friendly, bought me coffee, asked how much sugar I wanted.

A security officer arrived. I queried what was happening - he was very uninformative but friendly in a cagey way. 'I've had nothing but aggravation from you for fifteen years and now I know why,' he said. 'This could be the big one.' The inmates collected together some tobacco to give me.

I was on a high. A Tactical Firearms Unit escorted me all the way to Brixton; on the ferry from the Isle of Wight they had Heckler Koch assault guns. They spoke to me about football which was very unusual; they would normally be silent, staring. Try and sit in the back of a prison van, handcuffed, from Albany the whole way to Durham, knowing that you're going into solitary - they're staring at you with intense hatred, you're staring back, in silence for three hundred miles. Most of them are ex-servicemen and here's this 'IRA' man.

I thought it was bureaucracy, something to do with the appeal. When I got to Brixton, I'd just missed Gerry Conlon - he was in reception, we were being processed one at a time. Paddy Armstrong was there: he was tense, he grasped me and said, 'Something's happening.' I told him to sit down and said, 'Let's not run riot in our minds and then have to crash down afterwards.' Then I saw a prisoner who's in for a bullion robbery; he told me, 'You're going home on Thursday.'

I had to lean against the wall; I was dumbfounded. I always knew it would happen but imagined it would be through the procedure of a court and we would have time to prepare for it. Our hopes had been raised too many times in the past - the highest point was when we heard that the Balcombe Street men had confessed to the Guildford and Woolwich bombings in 1977.

Never in my happiest moments in prison - and I had very few happy moments - did I think they would admit the wrong, because it all comes back to the police. When we went to the Old Bailey on Thursday, I was happy, but my happiness was tempered because I knew I'd be taken back to Northern Ireland - because of another charge arising from Guildford police station. Neither I, or any of my co-accused, have any history of IRA involvement which pre-dates our arrest and the events in Guildford police station. I'm absolutely confident that I'll be vindicated.

After my euphoric release on bail I was met by a very large crowd. I felt absolutely ecstatic to grasp my daughter. For the next couple of hours until I reached the sanctuary of the North London family home, I was carried along on a roller-coaster of emotion. My daughter carried a bottle of champagne the whole way - I'd taken six painkillers because in Belfast, somebody squeezed me and cracked against my broken cheekbone. It was like an electric shock, like when your tongue touches a battery terminal. I was afraid to mix the champagne with the painkillers, I thought I might be falling around. We saved it and opened it when we arrived in London.

I hope eventually, it will be clear that the PTA was designed as a means of terrorising the community. Ironically, within two weeks of our arrest the entire Irish community knew that we were innocent. In the early days, the Irish community were petrified to say that they supported us - except for Sister Sarah Clarke, a 60-year-old Roman Catholic nun who was seen as such a security risk that she was barred from every prison in the country. That was the extent of the paranoia, the mechanism by which they were attacking the Irish community.

The press in the past few days have been paying a debt incurred by the anti-Irish racism generated by the press en masse, which enabled the state to unmuzzle itself, totally and absolutely unchallenged, against the Irish community. You can imagine how it felt in those days to be in the very belly of the state - in prison. If it was bad on the street, how horrific was it in the darkest dungeons where we languished?

That worked so effectively that it was only years later, that certain sections of the Irish community came out and spoke on our behalf and questioned the injustice. It built and built when people saw the brave stand being taken by the few. It built into a volcano which uncapped on Wednesday on the doorstep of the state's strongest institution, when literally thousands of people cheered our return from the belly of the beast. We hope we have breached the wall and that the Birmingham Six will come through the hole. At the moment, it's damage control - it's everybody's duty to ensure that they don't shore up the hole in the wall, so we can ensure that the Birmingham Six will eventually emerge. Then, perhaps, we can finally smash the wall - once and for all.